

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 01797 01 OF 03 201539Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----201627Z 027190 /50

R 201442Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3716
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 BEIRUT 1797

EXDIS

FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: PFOR PINS LE US
SUBJ: PRESIDENT SARKIS' VIEWS ON LEBANON

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT SARKIS OUTLINES RATIONALE OF HIS STEP-BY-STEP POLICIES. SAYS THAT HE HAS GIVEN ORDERS TO ARAB SECURITY FORCES TO PROCEED WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF CAIRO ACCORD ACCORDING TO LEBANESE INTERPRETATION. PLANS TO ANNOUNCE FURTHER SENIOR APPOINTMENTS FOR GOVERNMENTAL POSITIONS NEXT WEEK. INDICATES THAT ARAB AID NOT AS EXTENSIVE AS WE HAD UNDERSTOOD. HIS GRADUALIST APPROACH MAY BE BEST WE CAN HOPE FOR IN PRESENT SITUATION. END SUMMARY.

2. CALLED ON PRESIDENT SARKIS MORNING APRIL 19 FOR HOUR-LONG TOUR D'HORIZON. PRESIDENT EVIDENTLY FELT NEED TO EXPLAIN TO ME HIS APPROACH TO LEBANON'S PROBLEMS, PERHAPS BECAUSE OF
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 01797 01 OF 03 201539Z

FACT I HAD REPORTED TO FONMIN BOUTROS THAT SYRIANS WERE UNHAPPY WITH PACE OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS COUNTRY. HE STARTED OFF, HOWEVER, BY ASKING FOR MY APPRECIATION OF SITUATION.

3. I SAID IT SEEMED TO ME THAT THINGS WERE PROGRESSING, THAT HE HAD WON THE BATTLE OF THE ARMY COMMAND AND

THAT THE RECENT APPOINTMENTS, AND PARTICULARLY THE CONSTITUTION OF THE RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, WERE ALL GOOD SIGNS. THERE REMAINED, HOWEVER, A DEEP-SEATED CONCERN FOR SECURITY ON THE PART OF THE AVERAGE LEBANESE. NO ONE SEEMED TO HAVE A GREAT DEAL OF CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE, PARTICULARLY AS LONG AS SECURITY WAS DEPENDENT ON THE SYRIANS. FOR THAT REASON I THOUGHT HE HAD BEEN WISE TO CONCENTRATE ON RECONSTITUTION OF THE ARMY AS A SINE QUA NON FOR THE REESTABLISHMENT OF LEBANON. PEOPLE OFTEN SPOKE OF CHICKEN-AND-EGG. IN THIS CASE, I THOUGHT IT WAS A QUESTION OF NUMBER OF EGGS: THE ARMY, THE CAIRO ACCORD, RECONSTRUCTION, AND THE POLITICAL FORMULA FOR THE FUTURE OF LEBANON.

4. I SAID IT HARD TO KNOW WHICH EGG COMES FIRST, BUT THE NEED FOR SECURITY SEEMED PRIMARY. IN THIS RESPECT, WE WOULD DO WHAT WE COULD TO HELP LEBANESE WITHIN MODEST LIMITS OF AVAILABLE RESOURCES. WE EXPECTED TO BE HEARING FROM ARMY COMMANDER SOON WHAT HIS REQUIREMENTS WERE FOR UNIFIED ARMY, AND WE WANTED TO START PLANNING OUR RESPONSE. ON POLITICAL SIDE, WE HAD GIVEN A HELPING HAND IN THE CRISIS OF THE SOUTH AND THOUGHT OUR EFFORTS HAD HAD SOME IMPACT, ALTHOUGH THAT SITUATION REMAINED INHERENTLY UNSTABLE. WE WOULD CONTINUE TO GIVE THE REGIME OUR POLITICAL SUPPORT IN OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH LEBANESE AND OTHERS. OUR EFFORTS TO HELP WITH RECONSTRUCTION WERE BEGINNING TO BEAR FRUIT WITH THE ARRIVAL OF EQUIPMENT FOR THE PORT.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 01797 01 OF 03 201539Z

WE WERE ALSO IN CONTACT WITH THE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL ABOUT THE NOMINATION OF AN AMERICAN EXPERT TO HELP THE COUNCIL WITH PLANNING. PRESIDENT SARKIS INTERJECTED THAT A PARTICULARLY PRESSING NEED WAS FOR WAREHOUSE SPACE IN THE PORT, AND HE HOPED THAT WE COULD GIVE FURTHER AID IN THIS RESPECT, I.E. BEYOND PREFABS ALREADY ENROUTE.

5. SARKIS THEN SAID THAT HE THOUGHT MY ESTIMATE OF SITUATION WAS ACCURATE AND HE WANTED TO EXPLAIN TO ME HIS OWN OPERATING PHILOSOPHY. TO BEGIN WITH, HE WOULD LIKE TO ASSURE ME THAT NOTHING HE WAS DOING WAS BY HAZARD BUT THAT HE HAD A CAREFULLY THOUGHT-OUT PLAN AND PHILOSOPHY. CONTRARY TO MOST CHIEFS OF STATE WHO ASSUME OFFICE WITH A STRONG POSITION, HE HAD COME INTO OFFICE WITH NO POSITION AT ALL. HE HAD ALMOST SAID ON THE DAY THAT HE TOOK THE OATH OF OFFICE THAT HE WAS NOT REALLY TAKING THE OATH AS PRESIDENT OF REPUBLIC BECAUSE HE HAD ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO WORK WITH.

HE HAD NO ARMY, HE HAD NO POLICE FORCE, HE DID NOT
EVEN HAVE A PALACE GUARD. HE HAD HAD TO START FROM
SCRATCH AND MOVE VERY CAREFULLY.

SECRET

NNN

SECRET

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 01797 02 OF 03 201553Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----201636Z 027397 /42

R 201442Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3717
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 3 BEIRUT 1797

EXDIS

6. HIS FIRST OBJECTIVE HAD BEEN TO BRING ABOUT A
CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES. THIS HAD INVOLVED A GOOD
DEAL OF CONSULTATION WITH THE SYRIANS AND OTHERS, BUT
FINALLY THAT POINT HAD BEEN REACHED. IT SHOULD HAVE
BEEN FOLLOWED BY IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CAIRO ACCORD,
AND PARTICULARLY, THE SURRENDER OF EXCESS ARMS HELD
BY THE PARTIES AND A REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF
PERSONS BEARING ARMS. TO THIS PURPOSE, HE HAD HELD
A DOZEN MEETINGS WITH THE MEMBERS OF THE
QUADRIPARTITE COMMISSION, ALL OF WHOM HAD ORIGINALLY
BEEN IN AGREEMENT WITH THE LEBANESE INTERPRETATION OF
THE ACCORD AND HAD BEEN URGING ITS IMPLEMENTATION.
WITH THE DEATH OF JUNBLATT AND WITH THE PRESSURES
EXERTED ELSEWHERE BY THE PALESTINIANS, THE ATMOSPHERE
HAD CHANGED, AND WHILE THE REPRESENTATIVES ON THE
COMMISSION ALL AGREED WITH HIM ON THE NEED TO
IMPLEMENT THE ACCORD STRICTLY, THEIR GOVERNMENTS HAD
GOTTEN COLD FEET AND WERE NOW LEAVING IT UP TO THE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 01797 02 OF 03 201553Z

LEBANESE AND IN EFFECT ABSOLVING THEMSELVES FROM ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR WHAT HAPPENED. HE HAD ALSO HAD TO DELAY ACTION BECAUSE OF THE SITUATION IN THE SOUTH. HE AGREED THAT IT WAS PRECARIOUS, BUT NOW THAT THERE SEEMED TO BE A BREATHING SPELL HE WAS GOING TO PROCEED. HE HAD GIVEN THE ORDER TO THE ARAB SECURITY FORCES TO IMPLEMENT THE ACCORD ACCORDING TO THE LEBANESE INTERPRETATION. THE SYRIANS, WHO WERE QUITE FIRM IN THEIR INTENTIONS TO CARRY OUT THE ACCORD, WERE NOW STUDYING THE MODUS OPERANDI. HE DID NOT KNOW WHEN IMPLEMENTATION WOULD BEGIN; IT WOULD NOT BE IMMEDIATELY, BUT IT WAS COMING.

7. HE THEN NOTED THAT EVERY MONTH SINCE HE HAD ASSUMED OFFICE, THERE HAD BEEN AT LEAST ONE MAJOR UNTOWARD INCIDENT WHICH HAD POISONED THE ATMOSPHERE AND HAD MEANT A BACKWARD STEP IN TERMS OF PROGRESSION TOWARDS NORMALCY. HE HAD THEN REGROUPED HIS FORCES AND STARTED UP AGAIN ONLY TO HAVE ANOTHER SETBACK, FOLLOWED BY RESUMPTION OF PROGRESS AND ANOTHER SETBACK, ETC. IF THE BASIC ORGANISM HAD NOT BEEN FAIRLY HEALTHY IT WOULD NOT HAVE SURVIVED THESE SETBACKS. THE FACT THAT THEY HAD GOTTEN THROUGH THE EVENTS FOLLOWING THE ASSASSINATION OF KAMAL JUNBLATT WITHOUT MORE TROUBLE WAS TESTIMONY TO THE PROGRESS THEY HAD MADE DURING THE PAST SIX MONTHS.

8. HE HAD BEEN CRITICIZED FOR NOT FILLING THE MANY VACANCIES IN THE SENIOR RANKS OF THE CIVIL SERVICE AND THE GOVERNMENT. HE HAD DELIBERATELY NOT DONE SO BECAUSE HE FELT THAT UNLESS HE COULD GET TOGETHER A UNIFIED ARMY THERE WOULD BE NO PURPOSE IN APPOINTING PEOPLE. IT WAS NOT UNTIL HE WAS SURE HE WAS GOING TO BE ABLE TO HAVE HIS OWN MAN AT THE HEAD OF THE ARMY AND CONFIDENT THAT HE WOULD BE ABLE TO RECONSTITUTE IT THAT HE THOUGHT THERE WAS ANY PURPOSE SERVED IN

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 01797 02 OF 03 201553Z

FILLING THE VACANCIES. HE NOW HAD THAT ASSURANCE AND HAD TAKEN THE LOGICAL NEXT STEP, THE APPOINTMENT OF NEW PEOPLE TO RUN THE INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES AND THE SURETE. NEXT WEEK THE CABINET WOULD BE ANNOUNCING A NUMBER OF OTHER APPOINTMENTS IN WHICH THEY WOULD ATTEMPT TO PUT THE RIGHT MAN IN THE RIGHT PLACE. SIMILARLY, HE HAD DELAYED APPOINTMENT OF THE RECONSTRUCTION AND

DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL BECAUSE HE DID NOT WANT TO HAVE A COUNCIL THAT HAD NO MONEY TO PLAY WITH. IF THEY WERE JUST TO SIT WITH FOLDED HANDS AND WITH NOTHING TO DO, IT WOULD BE DESTRUCTIVE OF MORALE. HE THOUGHT WE WOULD FIND ATALLAH, THE DIRECTOR OF THE COUNCIL, A GOOD PERSON TO WORK WITH.

SECRET

NNN

SECRET

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 01797 03 OF 03 201607Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----201705Z 027628 /41

R 201442Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3718
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T SECTION 3 OF 3 BEIRUT 1797

EXDIS

9. WITH REGARD TO THE POLITICAL FORMULA AND PARTITION, HE THOUGHT THAT IN SPITE OF A GOOD DEAL OF NOISE ON THE SUBJECT, THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS WERE NOT REALLY PUSHING PARTITION. HE THOUGHT IT BETTER NOT TO GET INTO DISCUSSION OF TEXTS OR SPECIFIC PROPOSALS WHICH WOULD BE OBSOLETE IN A MATTER OF MONTHS. RATHER, ONCE THE AUTHORITY OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT WAS ESTABLISHED AND ONCE THE ECONOMY GOT MOVING, HE THOUGHT THE LEBANESE WOULD REUNIFY. THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE SOME ASSURANCES GIVEN TO THE MARONITES REGARDING THEIR ROLE, INCLUDING ASSURANCE THAT, EVEN THOUGH THE MOSLEMS MIGHT PREDOMINATE IN NUMBERS, THE BASIC CHRISTIAN CHARACTER OF THE COUNTRY WOULD NOT BE CHANGED. HE THOUGHT ALL OF THIS WAS NEGOTIABLE. IT WAS TOO BAD THAT THE CENTER OF THE TOWN HAD BEEN DESTROYED, BECAUSE THAT WAS WHERE CHRISTIAN AND MOSLEM MET AND MADE MONEY TOGETHER. IT HAD BEEN A VERY

IMPORTANT UNIFYING ELEMENT.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 01797 03 OF 03 201607Z

10. HE AGREED THAT THINGS WERE PICKING UP GRADUALLY BUT UNDENIABLY THE ECONOMY HAD NOT REALLY STARTED MOVING YET. THE ARAB STATES WERE TAKING AN ATTITUDE THAT THEY WERE NOT GOING TO ADVANCE MONEY TO LEBANON UNTIL THE SITUATION WAS MORE STABLE. HE WAS TRYING TO CONVINCE THEM THAT THE STABILITY COULD NOT BE CREATED UNLESS THE MONEY WAS FIRST ADVANCED. ONCE THE ECONOMY WAS MOVING, THE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE WOULD IMPROVE. I SAID IT WAS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT THE ARABS WERE WAITING NOT SO MUCH FOR A RETURN TO NORMAL AS THEY WERE FOR SPECIFIC PLANS AS TO HOW THE MONEY WAS TO BE USED. THERE WAS A LACK OF COORDINATION ON THE PART OF THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT IN THIS RESPECT, AND WE, AS WELL AS THE ARABS, WERE WAITING FOR MORE PRECISION AS TO WHAT THE LEBANESE WANTED TO DO WITH WHAT. WE HOPED THAT THE NEW RECONSTRUCTION BOARD WOULD SHED SOME LIGHT ON THIS. I THEN ASKED IF THE SAUDIS, KUWAITIS, AND QATARIS HAD NOT AGREED ON RATHER SUBSTANTIAL HELP FOR LEBANON. HE SAID ALL THEY HAD AGREED ON WAS 50 MILLION POUNDS FROM THE SAUDIS AND 30 MILLION FROM THE KUWAITIS FOR HELP IN THE RECONSTRUCION OF HOUSING. THIS COMPARED WITH A LEBANESE ESTIMATE OF TOTAL REQUIREMENTS FOR HOUSING OF 550 MILLION POUNDS. THIS HAD BEEN GIVEN MORE AS A SOCIAL WELFARE GRANT THAN FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

11. MEETING CLOSED WITH SARKIS REMARKING THAT HE UNDERSTOOD I WAS ON THE HIT LIST, ALONG WITH MY SAUDI AND KUWAITI COLLEAGUES. THE DAY DID NOT PASS THAT HE DID NOT RECEIVE INFORMATION TO THE EFFECT THAT HE TOO WAS A TARGET. ALL OF US HAD TO BE CAREFUL.

12. COMMENT: EXPOSE BY SARKIS IS INTERESTING EVIDENCE OF HIS SENSITIVITY TO WIDESPREAD CRITICISM OF SLOW PACE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 01797 03 OF 03 201607Z

OF RECOVERY. HE IS IMPRESSIVE IN HIS RATIONALITY AND INTELLIGENCE. ONE INSTINCTIVELY WISHES FOR A MORE DYNAMIC APPROACH, BUT IT IS TRUE SARKIS HAS HAD VERY LITTLE TO WORK WITH. (IT IS ALSO TRUE, HOWEVER, THAT HE ENTERED OFFICE WITH UNPRECEDENTED INTERNATIONAL AND

DOMESTIC POLITICAL SUPPORT. HE HAD A CARTE BLANCHE WHICH HE DID NOT USE AS EFFECTIVELY AS HE MIGHT HAVE.) HIS PIECEMEAL TACTICS ARE PERHAPS ONLY WAY PROBLEM CAN BE DEALT WITH IN LEBANESE CONTEXT TODAY. WHATEVER HE DOES HE WILL BE BLAMED, AND HE CAN DO NOTHING PERMANENT UNLESS HE HAS SOMETHING OF A NATIONAL CONSENSUS. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, MOVING SLOWLY IS PERHAPS BETTER THAN TRYING RADICAL SOLUTIONS, PARTICULARLY GIVEN THE LACK OF ANY FORCE AT HIS DISPOSAL TO IMPLEMENT SUCH SOLUTIONS.

13. THE PRESIDENT'S REMARKS ABOUT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CAIRO ACCORD (PARA 6 ABOVE) CONFIRM OUR IMPRESSION FROM OTHER SOURCES THAT THIS PROCESS MAY TAKE MUCH LONGER THAN WAS EXPECTED TWO MONTHS AGO. PARKER

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, ECONOMIC RECOVERY, POLITICAL STABILITY
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 20-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BEIRUT01797
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X3
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770137-0453
Format: TEL
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770440/aaaabibs.tel
Line Count: 348
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 22a62aa2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 7
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2756849
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESIDENT SARKIS' VIEWS ON LEBANON
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PGOV, LE, US, (SARKIS, ELIAS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/22a62aa2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009